

## **The Adjudicator's Office 2016 Annual Report is published today**

Helen Megarry, the Adjudicator publishes the Adjudicator's Office Annual Report 2015-16 today.

The report covers the period 1 April 2015-31 March 2016, the final year of Judy Clements OBE's tenure as independent Adjudicator for HM Revenue and Customs, the Valuation Office Agency and The Insolvency Service.

Helen Megarry writes "I am very pleased to present the Adjudicator's Office Annual Report for 2015-16, I was appointed as Adjudicator from 11<sup>th</sup> April 2016, so this report covers the final year of Judy Clements' OBE tenure as independent Adjudicator. This is the 23<sup>rd</sup> report since the formation of the Adjudicator's Office in May 1993."

She goes on to say "It is very positive to see the improvement in complaint handling over the past year by all three organisations, demonstrating their willingness to learn from complaints."

And finally she concludes "I look forward to my role as Adjudicator. Over the coming months, I will be working with my team to develop the strategy for the Adjudicator's Office for 2016-21. I aim to continue to refine processes to improve customer service while maintaining the quality and independence of investigations. The Adjudicator's Office business plan will be published in the autumn once we have had time to define our strategy for the next five years and our delivery plans."

Complaints about the Insolvency Service will be transitioned to the Insolvency Service Chief Executive who has overall responsibility for the day-to-day management of the Insolvency Service and is accountable to Parliament for the Insolvency Service's performance and use of public money. We will work with the Insolvency Service to help them as they transition their complaints handling in-house.

The largest proportion of complaints received by the Adjudicator were about HMRC Tax Credits. The number of complaints referred to the Adjudicator by customers of the Valuation Office Agency and The Insolvency Service remain low.

There were no complaints about Pension Wise during 2015-16, their first operational year. From 1st April 2016, Pension Wise has transferred from HM Treasury to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The independent review of complaints about Pension Wise will be dealt with by DWP's Independent Case Examiner so that any complaints follow the same process as all other DWP complaints.

### **Notes for editors:**

1. The Adjudicator's Office was set up in 1993 to look into complaints about the Inland Revenue (including the Valuation Office Agency). HM Customs and Excise and the Contributions Agency joined in 1995. From 2003 the office took on complaints about The Insolvency Service. In April 2005 the Inland Revenue and HM Customs and Excise merged to form HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC). In March 2015, The Adjudicator was asked to become the independent reviewer for complaints about HM Treasury, Pension Wise. In its first year there were no complaints from Pension Wise. Following the move of Pension Wise to Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), from 1 April 2016 Pension Wise complaints will be considered by DWP. Going forward The Insolvency Service will be transitioning their complaints in house.
2. Helen Megarry was appointed as Adjudicator from 11 April 2016 when Judy Clements OBE completed her 7 year appointment.
3. The Adjudicator acts as an impartial referee when people are not satisfied with the way the departments have dealt with a complaint. She looks at complaints about handling issues, such as mistakes, delays, staff attitude and quality of advice. She does not consider complaints about the law, or where an independent tribunal already exists for settling disagreements. Her recommendations are independent and her services are free to complainants.
4. This report covers the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016. It is also available electronically at [www.adjudicatorsoffice.gov.uk](http://www.adjudicatorsoffice.gov.uk).
5. Further information about the office (including leaflets on how to complain) can also be obtained from the above address or website.
6. Media enquiries to Jane Brothwood, Head of Office,  
e-mail: [jane.brothwood@adjudicatorsoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:jane.brothwood@adjudicatorsoffice.gsi.gov.uk)  
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#### Statistics 2015-16 (2014-15 in brackets)

	HM Revenue and Customs	Valuation Office Agency	The Insolvency Service	Total
Complaints taken on for investigation	1226 (1044)	18 (31)	23 (27)	1267 (1102)
Investigation cases completed	914 (1808)	28 (35)	28 (7)	970 (1850)
Number upheld either partially or wholly	666 (1543)	13 (15)	9 (4)	688 (1562)

In 2015-16 the Adjudicator recommended HMRC pay a total of £82,580 in redress to complainants for worry and distress and poor complaints handling (£243,967 in 2014-15). She also asked HMRC to reimburse £57,126 for direct costs (£123,605 in 2014-15). The Adjudicator recommended that HMRC give up liability for tax and overpaid Tax Credits amounting to £806,755 (£2,629,197 in 2014-15).

The Adjudicator recommended VOA pay a total of £600 in redress (£900 in 2014-15). There were £550 in direct costs in 2015-16 (£nil on 2014-15). The Adjudicator recommended The Insolvency Service pay £550 in redress (£375 in 2014-15). There were direct costs of £10 (£nil in 2014-15). No recommendation was made for any liability to be given up for either of these departments.